

Amendment to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 18, with the following:

In preferred forms, the compositions are made up of from 2-4 different oxides or hydroxides, and most preferably are binary systems containing two different materials; moreover, all of the different materials of the composition should advantageously have an average crystallite size of from about zero up to about 4 nm or by XRD analysis. The preferred class of different materials are selected from the group consisting of the oxides and hydroxides of Al, Mg, Ca, Sr, Ba, Zn, Co, Ni, Fe, Ti, Pd, Rh, V, Mn, Ga and Si. In the case of binary compositions the following combinations are especially desirable: $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{MgO}$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{CaO}$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{SrO}$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{BaO}$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{ZnO}$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{CoO}$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{NiO}$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot [\text{MgO}] \cdot \text{TiO}_2$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{PdO}$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{RhO}$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{V}_2\text{O}_3$, $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{MnO}$, $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{MgO}$, and $\text{SiO}_2 \cdot \text{MgO}$. A particularly preferred binary composition contains aluminum oxide and magnesium oxide. Generally, one of the materials is present in a greater amount by weight as compared with another of the materials, so that the greater amount material can be deemed a matrix, with the lesser amount material being dispersed within the matrix. In terms of molar ratios, binary compositions in accordance with the invention should have a molar ratio of the first to the second material ranging from about 0.1-10.